Victoria Jones

10/14/13

Period 5

Deep Thoughts

*The Crucible*, Part II, 500 Word Responses to Statements

1. When it comes to confessing to a crime you did not commit in order to avoid punishment, Victoria would be unsure of whether to agree with or disagree with that statement. In truth no one should ever confess to a crime they did not commit, but should the punishment, for this denial though true, be death or a life sentence or a considerable amount of time spent paying for the crime, than she cannot disagree with confessing to a crime not committed. No one wants to die, even if your reputation is tarnished, it would be human nature to endeavor to survive, which would be found in this confession. However, if the punishment consists of some minor jail time, and no real damage to your reputation then why would you ruin your reputation by confessing where even though jailed, it stands you went into jail stating that you were innocent. She disagrees in that confession to this supposed crime is wise, because upon reflection there is no truth in that statement, a wise decision is a decision that would be look back upon with respect, one that would be respected in the future, and then used for reference, as a guideline, in further situations and decisions. A smart decision, however, is different from a wise decision, and it would be a smart decision when choosing to live and avoid death, the decision proving to be a survival instinct. Therefore, it is these varying situations that lead to Victoria’s indecision of whether to agree or disagree with this statement, being acceptable and agreeable for certain situations, while being disagreeable for others. In a whole, the idea and act of confessing to a crime that you did not commit is considered or believed by Victoria to be morally wrong, it would be putting blame and attaching a label to an innocent person who was pushed to confession because of mere power and threat. If a person was not threatened with death or jail time they would be more firm in their argument of the truth, their innocence would remain their argument, however when under pressure the individual is forced to make decisions in order to survive. The matter of life or death trumps the moral factor, unless, in the rare case of a high and saint like person where the moral factor is a high standard treasured above all else, then it would seem only logical for them to refuse to admit this false truth. What would happen in this case? The result is rather disappointing, an innocent individual, who has the courage to stand by their word, to attempt to defend themselves in this unjust accusation despite the fact that they could be facing death and a jail sentence that could end their life in multiple ways, with actual death or by causing their future life to be so difficult that it is almost, if not, impossible. This only further contributes to the fact that Victoria’s agreement or disagreement to this statement is based on situational ethics. Situational ethics basically means that these decisions and laws are based on the circumstances, which is where Victoria finds herself when considering the truth of this statement.
2. Victoria definitely without a doubt disagrees with the statement that the difference between right and wrong is clear. There has never in the history of the world been a clear definition and difference between right and wrong, otherwise half of the wars and events that have conflicted our planet would not have existed or occurred, as would decisions been made much easier. One of the reasons there is no clear line between right and wrong has to do with the fact that no one thinks along the same lines, although people are raised similarly, but constricted to their region, which is why a war between, say the North and South of the United States, can occur because although raised on the same continent, it was clear that the two regions, North and South, both experienced different definitions of right and wrong. Those in the North, the general majority, believed it was wrong to own slaves, that they were as equal as their owners, while those in the South, the general majority, found nothing wrong in owning slaves, that it aided them in earning money for the family. Another more modern difference can be found between meat eaters and vegetarians; the vegetarians believe it is wrong to kill cows and other such animals for the purpose of eating their meat, while meat eaters, or the carnivores, have no objections to this or find anything wrong in eating meat, that it is a form of survival. Naturally the body requires meat, which can in fact be seen in the food table that says your body requires a portion of red meat and white meat, as well as grains and other foods in order to provide a balance. These different definitions of right and wrong stem from the fact that people formulate different opinions, that they see things differently, and that this difference therefore depends on the individual. Another contributing factor to this unclear difference between the two has to do with the fact that sometimes, situational ethics again, the wrong thing to do may be the right thing to do, or that the wrong and right thing are so similar or one in the same that it is impossible to determine whether the act is right or wrong. For example, is it right or wrong to claim the life of another man? What if this man was going to crash a plane and kill 30 innocent people? Killing him, claiming another’s life is a moral violation, wrong, but to kill him in order to save 30 people and possibly more could be seen as the right thing to do. Another more difficult decision that relates to the same issue could be seen if say a child was wearing a bomb vest and the vest was impossible to diffuse and the child’s status unfortunately determined the activity of the bomb, alive and it detonates, dead and it is deactivated, thereby avoiding the death of 100 innocent individuals, adults and children, what would be the right thing to do? As seen in the wisely stated words of Spock in Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan: “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.”
3. Victoria is at a standstill when it comes to agreeing to or disagreeing with the statement of it being better to die for what you believe in rather than to lie to save your life. Human nature and the survival instant would dictate that you lie in order to save your life, while lying could be a guilt upon someone’s conscious, although now a days, most people will agree with this, or at least will partake in it, whether not acknowledging that should this circumstance arise, they would indeed lie in order to survive. This also depends on the cause or the belief you would be dying for, where in that case people may in fact agree with this statement, as would Victoria should the belief or cause be truly worth it, which she would quickly respond to, it better be very, very, important, otherwise, she does not plan on dying for it. You can die for a good cause versus lying about it, denying it, and then finding yourself ashamed, this would be, more or less, the thinking that would lead an individual to agree with this statement. While the idea that “I didn’t sign up for this,” or someone not being a hundred percent into the cause would easily disagree with this and would lie in order to save their lives, especially if their views are centered around themselves. While being egocentric will not automatically dictate that you disagree with this statement, Victoria is fairly certain that this will in fact be a major contributing factor. She would say that at this particular moment, while unsure of her side, she is leaning more towards not dying for something she believes in, lying to live; her life is important to her, and she is most definitely not the suicidal type. It also a very vague definition for dying for your cause, after all while dying may prove you to be a martyr it would also prove that you are no longer alive and therefore no longer capable in influencing or spreading your cause and beliefs. It would seem more beneficial to remain alive in order to influence and reach others, people who will quickly understand your lies to survive and continue inspiring. Dying for what you believe in does not have to be a cause, it can relate to an accusation, one in which the person refuses to lie about what actually happened. This would prove the agreement in the statement, however, the reason Victoria faces difficulties with this statement is due to the fact that there are also defenses for why not to lie. Lying does not sit properly on everyone’s conscience and is not something people need to be proud of, it develops a habit and only leads to further lies. It is these lies that lead to distrust, and can only further hurt your life, therefore you either die for what you believe, which does not necessarily need to be a cause, it can be your innocence, or living by lying, which would most likely be the ideal or goal of the individual.
4. Victoria very quickly, without much thought disagrees with the statement that there is only one way to properly interpret the Bible. Again this depends on how your mind works, and what it is that the individual believes in, rooting from the basic and common thought that everyone thinks differently. Even in a normal piece of work, whether from earlier times or modern times, people interpret the text differently, which is what makes the work important to the individual. Poems are also differently interpreted, this is the desired outcome of the work, it is the reason why the authors do not explain why they wrote what they did or the reasons behind the referencing or their word choices, they leave it entirely up to the audience on how to interpret their work. Each work holds a different meaning and significance to others; it contributes to the works being special to that person and to the author. The Bible, though religious, is no exception, while it may have been written in order to tell a story full of lessons, and demonstrations, it is still left to multiple interpretations, especially considering the change in time periods. In more modern times it can easily be said that the Bible is interpreted differently than would be interpreted by those of the 17th century, when people were far more religious as a whole in terms of population compared to that of today, where people are religious, but it can easily be argued that they are not as religious as during the 17th century and earlier times. It also stands that in modern times there are more possible religions that people can be committed to, leading to other works that are used instead of the Bible, such as the Quran. These differing texts may share a similar aspect in purpose and material, but the interpretation of both vary, as do those who view one of the texts in one way versus the other who sees the other text differently. Furthermore each story and tale from the Bible can mean different things to certain people, as well as be related to differently, which allows for different interpretations of the same text. The difference in time period as well as major events, or events that affect your community, can influence how these stories are related to, such as if a war was occurring, some might suddenly relate the current state of the world to Revelations, as oppose to relating it to another book during peaceful times. Interpretations also depend on what is occurring in the individual’s life, are they happy and feeling inspirational? Are they relating to Psalms? Are they depressed or foreboding the worst? Did they recently experience death in the family? All of these life changing incidents are personal, yet they can change the way in which you view things. People can also be introduced to new ideas, changing their previous interpretation, another person having elaborated on an idea that had not occurred to you, changing you look on the information. This may happen with the Bible, say a more knowledgeable person or a more religious person, a priest, informs you of something else concerning the Bible that you had not previously known, it would then alter your perception of the Bible.
5. Victoria has to agree with the statement, that which does not destroy you only makes you stronger. If something were to wreck your entire life and you not only manage to survive, but become a better person afterwards, despite all the challenges and the harsh experience, than it would be fair to say that the incident did not kill you, and in fact made you stronger. An example of this can be seen in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter;* Hester’s entire life is destroyed by the discovery of her sin, which then leads to her punishment of wearing a scarlet letter for the rest of her life. Despite the challenges and the various moments of depression experienced by Hester, she survives, and at the end of the novel is considered to be the most perfect person in town, a perfect example of what a Puritan should be, and as seen in the last chapter, people come to her with their problems, seeking guidance and advice from her. In the end she suffered, but she became a better individual; this still relates to our time although sometimes it is used in different contexts, such as say eating something you are not sure you should have, a common reply to that may be, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Even in different contexts the phrase still means the same thing, which is what it very plainly states, what does not kill you makes you stronger. This phrase can be a comment on some dangerous feat or something you just should not have done, or it can be a motivational quote. It could aid someone when going through something hard, or are in the process of completing an arduous task, one which would roughly translate into, in the end all the hard work would be pay off. Even though the idea changes, and the interpretation is slightly off, it still has the basic meaning of if it does not kill you it makes you stronger, it leaves you a better person afterwards, that all the hard work or the harsh results that you experienced is worth it in the end, or at least most of the time, there are always exceptions. Of course a major circumstance in which this statement is interpreted is that these things refer to the mental and emotional status of a person, not their physical body. You could break something severely and it would not be better after it heals, and it would not make you stronger, however, yes sometimes the statement is used in reference to physical injuries or wipeouts, but it mostly refers to that of mental states and perceptions. This statement very much relates to the will of an individual to go on, even after a horrific and damaging event, like the loss of a loved one. These things affect people greatly, it changes their life, and it is unbelievable when it happens, yet people overcome these challenges. They eventually stop grieving, and they manage to go on with their lives, as a stronger individual.
6. Victoria has no idea what to think of the next statement, which states that it is more difficult to forgive yourself if the person you have hurt does not forgive you. Victoria does not see how forgiveness of one self’s actions are connected to the affected individual’s forgiveness. She understands that a person must, usually, forgive the person who afflicted them in order to heal, but she does not understand what this forgiveness has to do or how it affects the afflicter’s forgiveness of themselves. This statement would be another one that falls under situational ethics, depending on the circumstances, like whether the act involved killing someone, after all a dead person cannot forgive you, and whether someone cares about another person’s thoughts, if that person forgives themselves than what else could they need? It also depends on how important the hurt individual’s forgiveness of the afflicter’s action is to them. If you care then yes you agree to this statement, but if you do not care, then you very quickly disagree to this statement, or could care less about the statement. This again like many of the other ones that come before it depends on the situation at hand, and how the individual thinks, all unique factors making the agreement or disagreement different for each person. It is these varying possibilities that leave Victoria unsure of whether she would agree or disagree to this statement, there are so many sides and approaches one could take to this statement, again, depending on the situation. This statement is very difficult, most people do not even seek forgiveness for their actions against others, especially if they were intentional, the only thing that might change that is if the person has an enlightenment or a near death experience and decides they need to get right with God, and so then require the forgiveness of others in order to forgive themselves, but she is pretty certain that only really happens in the movies. If their victim’s forgiveness is that important to them, than it is logical to think that their lack of forgiveness would not aid in only hamper the forgiving of themselves. She would think also that the importance of the forgiveness of the victim depends on the situation, or the act committed against them, perhaps if it was something small like a white lie, it would not matter, versus using them, cheating them or stealing from them, either a physical theft or a theft of an idea. This also depends on how religious you are, if religion is not your main focus or an important part of your life, agreement to this statement would decrease sharply, while if religion was farely important to you, then you would quickly agree to this statement. Victoria would have to say that this again depends on the situation and circumstance, but that she would probably lean more towards not agreeing with this statement, merely because she believes the important forgiveness is that of the victim forgiving his perpetrator.
7. Victoria is in full agreement with the statement that courage means doing something even though it can be difficult and fearsome. Courage is a rare trait that many people admire, something Victoria admires as well, it is not easy to be courageous and requires a lot of character and strength of will and of this character. If courage were an easy thing to come by, then it would not be treasured and respected, everyone would have it and being a coward would be the rare quality, however, this is not the case, courage is the rare quality and people from all countries and communities acknowledge this trait. This acknowledgement can be seen in the fact that the military awards medals for bravery, courageous service that saved many lives as well as demonstrated exceptional behavior despite the circumstances and dangers that was presented by the current situation; that the act was deemed extraordinary and above all expectations. These medals are not only given to military personal, other organizations acknowledge similar acts, though not necessarily relating to violence, but none the less demonstrating courage. The act can be a peaceful act, a piece of art that inspires people to change, one that could have been received very negatively or that the person could have been severely criticized for this act. An example of a peaceful act that took courage was Rosa Parks, refusing to give up her seat for a white man, as well as later participating in the boycott of riding on buses, a fact which would aid in the definite removal of segregation as stated by Congress. Someone who does something despite it being against the norm, as well as being possible unacceptable in society, these qualify as courageous acts, demonstrating that individuals courage in desire to change the world and actually doing something versus just thinking about how they could. These medals can come from international organizations, the President, other countries; the medals and recognitions are not limited to the United States, numerous other countries also participate in this act of acknowledging courage. The rarity of this quality leads to the widespread acknowledgement, as well as the widespread disapproval of cowardice, the definite opposite to courage, where the individual does nothing for himself or his country or community out of mere fear. Courage would then be the will and determination to overcome fear and obstacles with your head held high. The overcoming and facing of a fearsome and difficult task is a definite requirement in order for the act to be considered courageous, otherwise it would be an everyday accomplishment. True, bold courage is very rare, but little doses of courage, those that are not really noticeable and can be hard to detect are very common, it is what helps people every day when facing a difficult task, it helps them work and take on challenges that may end in failure. To be courageous you do not need a medal, or a military certification, you just have to be willing to take on something that could present you with failure, or a win in success.
8. At first thought Victoria would say that she does agree with the statement that a person is innocent until proven guilty, until it occurred to her that people who are innocent have been found guilty and convicted because of lack of evidence and support to prove their evidence. After all a person who has, say, three incriminating facts against themselves, yet only has one semi strong counterevidence for themselves, even if this person is innocent, the court with this evidence and information would find either the defendant or the plaintiff guilty, whichever is being incriminated despite their true status as innocent. Another form of crime that can take hold of this and change it is the possibility of being set up, although it is clearly no easy feat to accomplish, it does appear to, in some cases, be accomplishable, and should this be the case for you, then all evidence would prove against you and you would be either given a death sentence, spend the rest of your life in jail, or spend a great portion of your life in jail. It would be these, although rare situations, that would cause an innocent person to be found guilty, contradicting the statement that because they were proven to be guilty meant that they were no longer innocent. The statement says that a person is innocent until proven guilty, yes this may be true, but compared with the example above, it does not directly state that after being proven guilty the person is no longer innocent, there is still the possibility that the person is in fact innocent, and happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. At which case is unfortunate, but what then is a person suppose to do? If no information can be found to prove otherwise, if the mastermind behind the set up or the bad timing left you absolutely vulnerable with no protection, no defense, only your plea of not guilty, what then are you suppose to do? There is also the possibility that a person maybe found and proven to be innocent, but is very guilty and the epitome of a guilty person who just got away with a crime in the court of law. This person would forever be found innocent unless new information was brought to light because of double jeopardy, which states that a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime, whether found guilty or not guilty. This, along with the previous statements concerning that a guilty verdict does not mean the person is guilty, only aids in putting this statement at odds, where the ending words, proven guilty, mean nothing really, because although the majority is in fact guilty, there are going to be rare cases where the person is found innocent and is actually guilty, or found guilty and is actually innocent. It is a statement that is to vague and broad for someone, or at least Victoria, to decide whether to support it and agree with it or to disagree with it.
9. Victoria does not agree with the statement that beliefs in opposition to common values should be illegal, believing that these oppositions should be legal. This may be due to the fact that Victoria lives and has been raised in the United States, where freedom of speech and petition are allowed and given to each citizen. Every idea will have opposition, it is a given, however the opposition will vary in degrees, as well as being on different levels, meaning that there will not be a single opposition to the idea, there will be numerous oppositions. Each opposition will be backed by different people, and each opposition will prevent a challenge, this however is not cause for it to be labeled illegal. Our world and society is not like that of George Orwell’s *1984,* where the Thought Police monitors your thoughts and any oppositions you may have in regards to anything, whether a common belief or not, and this opposition would result in your detainment, possible torture or death, or both. Some countries, ruled by a dictatorship, such as China, Russia or Cuba, may be more likely to make these oppositions to common values illegal, but mainly because there they seek to make sure everyone is equal, and that everyone believes in the same ideas. A fact that is not accomplishable, you can see this in the lack of success in these countries, it has never been possible to make a country or place and its inhabitants equal in everything for everything, it is just an unaccomplishable feat. Victoria believes in the idea that everyone is entitled to their mind, their opinions, and ideas; opposition is a form of opinion, it is the person’s opinion against the common belief. She believes that people cannot expect to simply control the way people think, it is impossible. That leaves these oppositions being impossible to prevent, as well as being difficult to detect, how would you plan to enforce that? A person who holds opposition to a common value in a country or place where it is illegal is not going to walk into the police station or other federal office and say “Hey! I have oppositions against our common value; please arrest me for I have committed a crime.” There is a contrary argument that can be posed however it has nothing to do with these oppositions being illegal, it may though be beneficial if the oppositions were limited or better controlled. The reason being that if too much opposition rises in a community then it would be contradictory to the success and development of the community. It would prevent this development, which may only lead to further opposition, which would not be beneficial. This possibility is no reason to make these oppositions illegal, but only cause to monitor and limit to ensure that it does not get out of hand. Therefore while this is a plausible argument for the agreement in this statement, it does not provide a solid argument that would persuade Victoria to switch her disagreement to agreement, simply acknowledging the other argument, but not believing it to fully overpower her idea that this belief in opposition should be illegal.
10. The last statement of justice being determined in a court of law leaves Victoria to be unsure of her belief; however she does lean more towards agreement. She understands that in a court of law each side, the defendant and the plaintiff, are allowed the opportunity to explain their argument and tell their stories without the interruption of the other individual. They are also allowed the opportunity to present this before a judge, as well as an unbiased jury that is suppose to successfully determine, based on the facts and evidence presented during the trial, whether the defendant is guilty or innocent. The large number of jury members allows for a vote that further helps eliminate bias, as well as the fact that the jury has no relation to the people in court being accused or accusing, providing them with no other information to base their decision off from besides the evidence presented. Each person in the trial is allowed to bring forth evidence in their defense, which includes witnesses. These opportunities provided in the court of law are what provide the location where justice is best determined. These qualities of court and the presentation of your argument as well as the way they are received and judged are based on modern times, the court system however worked differently in the old days, and, as Victoria believes, was very flawed when it came to determine the justice to be carried out. A major flaw that came about during the old days was the jury, or the people they used to help determine the sentence besides the judge, the major flaw lied in the fact that these people, deciding these decisions, were locals, meaning it is very probable that they knew the people they were judging. This could be beneficial or damaging to the accused individual, either they could be friends who help you out, or they can be enemies who hate you and want you to pay for ripping them off in some sale or the other. Either way both scenarios prove for an unjust court room, where people had much more bias that was uncontrolled, even in the judge. Another flaw is that in old times the witnesses were very untrustworthy and they were the only form of evidence, there was no DNA, videos, pictures, substance samples, or anything else that helps determine their guilt in a modern court of law. Unreliable, swayed, and biased witnesses were the only thing left for evidence in their defense, who as friends might help them out or as their enemy may only help in condemning the pour soul who happened to say the wrong thing to the wrong person because they were in a bad mood that day and did not want to be disturbed. It is these unchecked factors, the qualities of the old court systems that provided for an unjust atmosphere, where justice did not prevail all the time, where innocent people may have been sentence to a hanging. These two important and plausible arguments are what leaves Victoria unsure about whether to agree or disagree.

Works Cited:

*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. Dir. Nicholas Meyer. Perf. William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy. Paramount Pictures, 1982. DVD.